

Town of Southern Shores' Ongoing Capital Street Improvement Program

Since 2008, the Town of Southern Shores has been engaged in a capital improvement program to effect necessary major repairs and in some cases, complete rebuilds, of its public streets and bridges. Most public streets in Southern Shores were built over fifty years ago, and all were built by private developers. Street conditions in Southern Shores went unattended and many are now in need of major repair or complete rebuild. Most were not built to current industry construction and safety standards. When all the streets were first built by private developers, trees were either left close to the street edge in the existing street right-of-ways, or have since matured in place over the years. Emerging mature roots have undermined the shallow base and thin asphalt of your streets. More importantly, mature trees along the near-edge of an asphalt street pose a danger to public safety.

The main premise of the capital street improvement plan has been to preserve the maritime forest ambiance of Southern Shores that has existed all these years. In implementing the program over the past five years, no attempt is ever made to purposely 'widen' a street (or create a 'thoroughfare'), nor is any attempt ever made to intentionally encourage increased traffic on our streets. In some cases the asphalt width must be increased slightly to accommodate for modern emergency and service trucks and school buses, which all provide services to you as residents. When major repairs or rebuilds are funded, certain trees too close to the street asphalt have to be removed for protection of the new public investment (due to emerging or storm related root and limb damage) and for vehicle, biking, and pedestrian safety reasons. Typically, tree growth within at least 4 feet of the edge of a proposed improved street has to be removed for these important purposes. In summary, trees within approximately 4 feet of asphalt edge have to be removed in these rebuild projects for 1) public safety, 2) protection of the new capital investment due to root upheavals under asphalt and potential root ball movement during storms, and 3) protection and preservation of the Town's right of way beside the asphalt edge for maintenance and future underground utility maintenance.

One interesting fact is that many streets in Southern Shores were built by a private developer to one side or the other of an existing street right-of-way - and not down the center of the available right-of-way. As required, the rebuild of any street dictates (for public safety and maintenance reasons) the improved street asphalt width to be centered in the street right-of-way in order to preserve the right of ways. In designing and constructing the needed improvements of your public streets, the Town is also now required to insure that water from storms accumulating in the street right-of-ways does not flow to adjacent properties. Certain modern enhancements must be designed and constructed to insure this as a part of the Town's capital investment.

Due to numerous ongoing complaints regarding safety, driving conditions, and ongoing deterioration, the Town developed a capital improvement plan in 2008. Since that time, streets are annually prioritized for necessary attention. During each budget cycle, a plan is developed specifically for the upcoming fiscal year. Typically, existing budget revenues have been appropriated for this purpose in amounts that have not yet required the Town's property tax rate to be increased for this purpose. Each year, the proposed streets slated for improvement for the upcoming year are published in the Town's e-newsletter, on its website, and are thoroughly vetted in the Town Council's Capital Improvement Committee and Town Council meetings - which are all noticed open meetings. Once the projects are funded, Town staff is then authorized to implement these projects utilizing the available funding for that fiscal year. Once preliminary design plans are developed, residents and property owners are notified individually by staff and are invited to comment on the plans. Once the final design plan is developed, the project goes out for bid and begins. Recent major streets that been necessarily rebuilt over the past five years include Hickory Trail, Chicahauk Trail (western portion), Spindrift Trail (southern portion), and Poteskeet Trail and Loop). Other Town streets have also been improved by major repair or rebuild as a part of this ongoing program. As always, any resident or citizen is encouraged to meet with Town staff and discuss any comments, concerns, or questions regarding street conditions and needed improvements.

Linked is a copy of the most current prioritization capital improvement plan for streets as adopted by the town Council in June of 2014.